



COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Parents, Guardians, and Families

Updated 9.16.20

This guidance document outlines public health and prevention strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and answer questions about how to keep your children safe.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious illness caused by a new virus that spreads from person to person.

We are learning more about COVID-19 each day. As of now, there is no vaccine or guarantee of [immunity](#) for the virus. Minnesota's public health community is working to slow the spread of COVID-19, and need everyone to help.

Evidence suggests children are less likely to contract COVID-19, and when they do, become less sick. Families and caregivers play a critical role in keeping their children healthy and slowing the spread of the virus. For more information on how to prevent COVID-19, reference the [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\)](#) and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) websites.

Symptoms

Symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Cough and/or sore throat
- Shortness of breath
- Chills
- Headache and/or muscle pain
- Loss of taste or smell
- Less common symptoms include nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

Not everyone experiences all of these symptoms, and some people never have any symptoms. These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after you are exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19. People with these symptoms should stay home. Call your health care provider if you need medical care.

Protect yourself, your family, and your community

To help prevent and spread COVID-19, everyone should:

- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If you can't wash your hands, use hand sanitizer that is at least 60 percent alcohol



- **Use a cloth face covering to cover your nose and mouth** when around others. Individuals who have trouble breathing or cannot reliably wear a mask, such as young children, should avoid wearing a mask.
- **Stay home when you are sick or if you have been tested for COVID-19 and are waiting for laboratory results.**
- **Cover your coughs and sneezes.**
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.**
- **Monitor your health and be alert for symptoms.** If you need to see a doctor, call your clinic first.

Slow the Spread

To slow the spread, MDH recommends practicing social distancing. This can be challenging with small children. Families should try to:

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Stay at least 6 feet from others in public places.
- Wear a cloth face covering when in public or around others.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid situations where you could be exposing people at higher risk of serious COVID-19 illness. This includes older adults and those with serious underlying health conditions.

Promoting Health with Children

- Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day.
- Children and staff should wash hands before and after outdoor activities, including playground time, shopping, etc.
- Teach children about proper handwashing.
- Talk with children about face coverings and why they are important to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Demonstrate how to safely put on and take off face coverings.
- Talk with children about how to stay healthy; avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth and cover their cough.



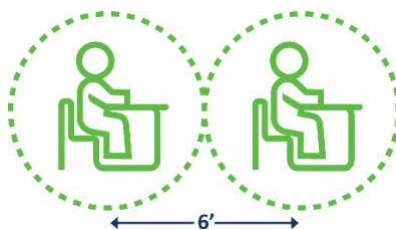
Family Supports during COVID-19

The Children and Family [Resource guide](#) ([Hmong](#), [Somali](#) and [Spanish](#)) includes information on economic, child care, mental health, and other COVID-19 supports that may be helpful for your family.

FAQ for Parents and Families

What is social distancing?

Social distancing refers to measures to restrict where and when people can gather in order to stop or slow the spread of infectious disease. In general, 6 feet of separation is a safe distance to keep from others, especially when in public for grocery shopping, playing with friends, any gatherings where there is intermingling of people. Social distancing guidance supports a 3-foot radius around each person, resulting in a 6-foot total distance between people.



What about face coverings?

The [Governor's Executive Order 20-81](#) (effective July 25, 2020) requires people in Minnesota to wear a face covering in all indoor businesses and public indoor spaces, unless alone. Additionally, workers are required to wear a face covering when working outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained. Research has shown that use of face coverings can greatly reduce the risk of infection when combined with other prevention efforts such as social distancing and hand hygiene.

Children under 2 years old should not wear face coverings. Children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old are not required to wear face coverings, but are encouraged to wear it when in public if they can do so reliably in compliance with CDC guidance on [How to Wear Cloth Face Coverings](#) (i.e., without frequently touching or removing the face covering). Kindergarten through grade 12 schools are required to comply with the face covering and face shield guidance available at [2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools \(PDF\)](#).

For more information about face coverings and the Executive Order, please see the [Frequently Asked Questions About the Requirement to Wear Face Coverings](#) and [Face Coverings in Child Care](#).



Key takeaways about cloth face coverings

- Create and wear cloth face coverings by following [CDC guidance](#).
- Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth while wearing cloth face coverings or face shields to prevent potential contamination.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before putting on the face covering or face shield. Remove carefully and wash your hands thoroughly.
- Wash the face covering or face shield after each use.
- Wearing a face covering or face shield does not replace the need to continue frequent hand washing, avoiding touching the face, and practicing social distancing.
- Continue to use your typical systems and processes for cleaning toys, keeping sick children home, washing hands, and other practices. These actions help to keep the community healthy and safe.
- Face coverings and face shields can reduce the risk of spread, but they do not provide complete protection for others if a person has symptoms compatible with COVID-19. Individuals with symptoms should stay at home.

What if I don't want my student(s) to wear a face covering while they are in school or child care?

Per Governor Walz's [Executive Order 20-81](#), all students grades K through 12 must wear a face covering while they are in school buildings. Exemptions exist for those with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that makes it unreasonable for the individual to maintain a face covering. Because this is such an important mitigation strategy, the state is helping to provide face coverings for students and staff who are in-person and hybrid learning.

In child care settings, children 5 years of age and under are not required to wear a face shield or face covering according to the Executive Order. However, a business could require it for children over the age of 2. Children who are under the age of 2 years, or children who are sleeping, unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering or face shield without assistance; or who cannot tolerate a shield or covering due to a developmental, medical, or behavioral health condition must not wear a face covering or face shield.



When should I keep my child home from school, child care or youth programming?

Remember that staying home when you feel sick or have been exposed to COVID-19 is one of our best tools in defense against this pandemic. It is important that parents and guardians are informed and aware of the guidelines for when their children can attend or need to stay home from school or child care. The [COVID-19 decision tree exclusion guidance](#) for school, child care and youth programming lays out a number of scenarios and appropriate steps for children, students, or staff. There are also resources below to help families screen their child and plan for attendance.

- [COVID-19 Attendance Guide for Parents and Families \(PDF\)](#): Guide for parents and families to understand when children can attend school, youth programs, and child care during COVID-19.
- [Home Screening Tool for COVID-19 Symptoms \(PDF\)](#): Home screening tool for parents and guardians related to COVID-19.

Is it safe to send my child to child care or youth programs?

Many child care, youth programs, and school programs are open and operating; those open are required to adhere to specific [public health guidance](#) related to the type of setting to keep children and families safe. Routine and socialization are important for children and these settings provide a critical service in allowing parents and guardians to work so they can support their families.

Youth and child care providers and programs are encouraged to communicate with families prior to programming and keep in touch often. The strategies they undertake should be adaptable as the level of community transmission increases to the point where programming must be disrupted. Families should be prepared:

- For a screening process when they drop their child off
- For children to not be allowed to attend and to isolate if they arrive with any symptoms based on MDH and CDC exclusion guidance ([COVID-19 Exclusion Guidance](#))
- Pick up and quarantine your child if they become symptomatic or are exposed to COVID-19 while participating in programming

When considering whether to send your child to in-person activities such as child care, youth programs, in-person education, or other activities, consider the risk factors and whether anyone in your family has an underlying condition. For specific guidance on youth sports, visit [the MDH webpage on youth sports](#).

The Administration is in regular communication with child care settings and youth programs to share updates on public health guidance to prioritize safety. Specific guidance has been developed to support



these programs in keeping your children and families safe, as well as the staff and communities offering education, enrichment and care to children.

If interested, the public health guidance for schools and child care, can be found at the following sites:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Guidance for Schools and Child Care Programs
\(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html)

[Schools and Child Care: Coronavirus Disease 2019
\(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/index.html)

What is the state doing to support access to child care during periods of hybrid and distance learning?

Many families will need care for their children during periods of hybrid and distance learning in order to report to work or fulfill other obligations. Families that need assistance with finding care can visit mn.gov/childcare to view a map of available, licensed child care providers or call the Child Care Aware referral line at 1-888-291-9811. The Governor's Children's Cabinet, in partnership with relative state agencies, are in continuous communication with and providing support to child care providers to share information, provide support and ensure they adhere to [required public health guidance](#). The state is also working to identify other opportunities to help meet the needs for school-age care.

Families in need of financial assistance should use Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota's [Bridge to Benefits](#) screening tool to determine financial supports for which they may be eligible. They are also encouraged to apply for [Child Care Assistance](#).

Families should also take this time to plan as schools may move between learning models to prioritize student safety and in-person instruction whenever necessary. Consider family, friends and neighbors that may be able to support you by providing care for your child if your child's school needs to quickly shift to hybrid or distance learning.

During a hybrid or distance learning model when students are not receiving in-person instruction, districts and charter schools will provide care for school-age children age 12 and under who are children of critical workers on Tier I of the state critical worker list. This care is provided during regular school hours at no cost. Tier 1 includes:

- Healthcare and public health
- Law enforcement, public safety and first responders
- Food and agriculture
- Judicial Branch (essential services)
- National Guard (activated under a Gov. Executive Order)



- Educators and school staff providing in-person instruction or caring for children of critical workers
- Child care and school-age care providers

What worker protections are in place for parents who face barriers to child care access during periods of distance or hybrid learning?

The federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) requires certain employers to provide employees with emergency paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. These provisions are effective through Dec. 31, 2020. The paid sick leave and the expanded family and medical leave provisions of FFCRA apply to certain public employers and to private employers with fewer than 500 employees.

This includes up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay (up to \$200 a day and \$10,000 in the aggregate). This is available for employees, who has been employed for at least 30 calendar days, is unable to work in order to care for a child whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19.

Small businesses with fewer than 50 employees may qualify for exemption from the requirement to provide leave due to school closings or child care unavailability if the leave requirements would jeopardize the viability of the business as a going concern. Also, health care providers and emergency responders can be excluded.

More information can be found on the U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division [webpage](#).

Is it safe to send my child to school?

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), in partnership with MDH, issued [guidance](#) to schools to provide pre-K through grade 12 (K-12) school leaders guidance around policies, practices, and strategies that districts and schools must implement. They also provided recommendations districts should consider to optimize education and promote health and safety, while mitigating risk throughout the school year. School districts in consultation with local public health, MDE and MDH are working to identify the best learning model to implement, in-person, hybrid or distance learning. Safety is the backbone of all of these plans and implementation of dial forward or dial back strategies with schools to create safe and healthy school environments.

Where can I find out more information on the Safe Learning Plan for the 2020-21 School Year and what my school is considering in its learning model?



There is a [webpage](#) devoted to frequently asked questions related to the 2020-2021 school year and Safe Learning Plan. Please visit this site to learn more.

Can I have a nanny or babysitter?

As with the general public health guidance, from a virus and transmission perspective, we would recommend limiting intermixing families and groups as much as possible. However, child care is a critical sector and essential for families to live, work, go to school, and support their families. Interacting with any person increases risk of transmission. We recommend that babysitters wear face coverings, you keep surfaces clean before and after someone is in your home and think about using nannies and babysitters who are practicing social distancing and limiting interacting in their own lives. Make sure your babysitter or nanny is staying home if they are sick or if they have been exposed to someone that has COVID-19.

If I co-parent with another household, am a blended family, or share custody with my child, is it ok for my child to travel between households? Can my child see their other parent?

Stability, routine, and connection is critical to a child's development and well-being. While we encourage all families to practice social distancing and limit gatherings, this should not be interpreted as stopping normal family interactions. Current evidence indicates that children are less likely to contract COVID-19, and when they do, they become less sick.

To limit transmission potential, families could consider washing clothes and other items carried between households. Encourage healthy behaviors in both households, such as handwashing, covering sneezes and coughs, social distancing, etc. Families should consider having a plan for alternative care arrangements should a family member get sick and need to quarantine in one home.

What about outdoor environments?

The Governor has encouraged healthy and safe outdoor activities such as walking, running, fishing, and hunting. Minnesotans can continue to enjoy parks, trails, and other public recreation lands, consistent with any limitations established by the land administrator. We urge people engaging in outdoor activities to:

- Practice social distancing
- Avoid unnecessary travel
- Not congregate in groups larger than 25



- Exercise caution when using public spaces such as picnic tables, benches, drinking fountains, or other sites
- Follow the [DNR/MDH outdoor recreation guidelines](#)

What about playgrounds?

Children of all ages need to move their bodies and stay physically active. Getting outside for fresh air and movement is important to support physical and mental health on a daily basis. Like other outdoor activities, going to a public playground is allowed under the Stay Safe Order. Families and guardians should:

- Be careful to ensure children wash hands after touching play structures and maintain 6 feet of space from other children as much as possible.
- Refer to more detailed guidance from MDH on playgrounds:
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/playground.pdf>

Although the Governor's order doesn't close playgrounds, they may be closed by local authorities. Local authorities, districts, and child care settings are encouraged to continue to use playground facilities for children in their care and use strategies to limit possible exposures.

What about pets?

Treat pets as you would other human family members, do not let pets interact with people or animals outside the household. If a person inside the household becomes sick, isolate that person from everyone else, including pets. The CDC is aware of a small number of pets worldwide, including cats and dogs, reported to be infected with the virus, mostly after close contact with people with COVID-19. Based on the limited information available, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is low, however it can spread between people and animals in some situations. For more information visit the [CDC](#) website.

Can we go to swimming pools?

The [CDC](#) says to follow [safe swimming practices](#) along with social distancing and [everyday preventative actions](#) to protect yourself. There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the water. Proper operation, maintenance, and disinfection (with chlorine or bromine) of pools should kill COVID-19. For additional information, review [Reopening of Public Swimming Pool and Aquatic Facilities](#).



What about visiting the doctor and well-child check-ups?

MDH and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children continue to visit the doctor and receive their well-child check-ups. Since the onset of the pandemic, a significant drop in well-child visits resulted in delays of important screenings and preventive care. Pediatricians and health care providers have created telehealth options for certain types of visit to provide a safe option that does not interrupt care. Call your child's health care provider to learn about the safest way to get health care for your child during the pandemic.

How should my family clean our house?

Routine cleaning and disinfecting is important to maintaining a safe environment for children and families. Cleaning removes dirt and most germs and is usually done with soap and water. Disinfecting kills most germs, depending on the type of chemical, and only when the chemical product is used as directed on the label.

Consider regular cleaning of things that your family touches a lot: counters and other surfaces; telephones, remote controls and other devices; doorknobs, stairway railings and other objects. Use [EPA-registered household disinfectants](#) and CDC guidance on [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home](#).

Is it safe for my child or family to use buses and transportation?

- Youth programs like day camps will likely encourage you to transport your kids versus using a bus where social distancing is challenging.
- [CDC has specific guidance for busing](#) for youth programs when that is required and necessary.

Is it safe for my child to have a friend over? Can my teen hang out with their friends?

At this time, the recommendation is to ensure social distancing and indoor gatherings are limited to 10 or under and outdoor gatherings to 25 or under. There is risk with any intermixing of children, youth, families and communities. As children and teens interact, here are some tips:

- Maintain social distance and wear face coverings based on age recommendations.
- Play and interaction should occur outside wherever possible.



- Wherever feasible, encourage bag lunches from home rather than sharing food. If meals are served family-style, plate each meal to serve it so multiple people are not using the same serving utensils.
- Clean and disinfect common surfaces.
- Whenever possible, participant pick-up and drop-off should occur outside and be staggered if multiple families are involved.

Is it okay for my family to travel?

Be mindful of traveling and remember that staying close to home helps protect your neighbors from spreading COVID-19 and avoids crowding rural medical facilities.

- Practice social distancing, wear a face covering and stay home if you are sick.
- For further guidance on travel, visit the [CDC website](#).

What happens if someone in my family is exposed to someone with COVID-19?

People who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 need to isolate at home for 14 days from the last day of exposure. Only the person who had contact with the confirmed case needs to isolate at home. Other family members are able to continue their regular activities as long as the family member that was exposed does not become sick. You can find COVID-19 testing information on the [Minnesota COVID-19 response website](#).

What happens if someone in my family gets sick?

In general, people diagnosed with COVID-19 will be asked to stay home until you have had no fever for at least 24 hours AND improvement of other symptoms AND at least 10 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.

Families should [Make a Plan](#) with your family about caring for your children and loved ones if you become ill and are not able to take care of those who need you, assuming that your children have also been exposed.

Siblings, household members, and people identified as close contacts of the case will also need to stay home for 14 days.

Questions?

Please send questions to childrenscabinet.MMB@state.mn.us or call us at 651-259-3636

